

Hearing Testimony SB88
Senate Natural Resources Committee
January 23, 2013

Senator Chas Vincent &
Senate Natural Resource Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the following comments. On behalf of the Central Montana Regional Water Authority, I would like to offer the following testimony for the record about SB88:

We believe that this water compact for the Upper Missouri National Monument area between the State of Montana and the United States Government resolves the concerns we had when the agreement was first proposed by the USDA Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The Board believes that this compact is preferable to leaving federal water reserves decisions up to the courts.

Our primary issue is future development of water resources. This compact does not include a development cap or basin closure provision as was originally proposed. We can continue to work within Montana's current water laws and water rights processes.

No new limits on future development of groundwater are included in this compact beyond Montana's current water permitting laws.

The compact protects all existing water users in Montana Water Court basins 41R and 41S by subordinating the BLM's water right to June 1, 2012.

The in-stream flow reservation is concurrent with existing flows and "non-additive" in the Judith River.

The compact protects current exempt (from state permitting) water uses from call by BLM.

All the above provisions are in the best interests of our Water Authority. Accepting this compact will not negatively impact our regional water project in Central Montana.

The Water Authority Board of Directors believes that Water Rights Compact Commission and staff have done a good job of protecting our interests and the interests of the State of Montana through these negotiations. We thank them for their efforts.

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